CLAIMS

1. A rich media file stored in a machine-readable medium, comprising:

information to be displayed on a computer system; and

a viewer designed to display the information on the computer system,

5   the information and the viewer contained in a single file.

2. A rich media file according to claim 1, further comprising limit means for limiting viewing of the rich media file.

10   3. A rich media file according to claim 2, wherein the limit means is selected from a setting defining a predetermined number of viewings of the information, a setting defining a predetermined number of days, a predetermined expiration date, and a password controlling access to the rich media file.

15   4. A rich media file according to claim 2, wherein limit means is designed to expire the rich media file, and rich media file is designed so that it cannot be viewed after the rich media file has expired.

5. A rich media file according to claim 1, further comprising checking means for

20 checking if there is a later version of the rich media file.

6. A rich media file according to claim 1, further comprising a query asking a user if the user would like to retrieve a later version of the rich media file.

25   7. A rich media file according to claim 1, further comprising retrieval means for retrieving a later version of the rich media file.

8. A rich media file according to claim 1, wherein the information is compressed using a compression technique to reduce the size of the rich media file.

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9. A rich media file according to claim 1, the rich media file further comprising a unique file identification in addition to a file name.

10. A rich media file according to claim 1, wherein the information is formatted into a plurality of pages.

11. A rich media file according to claim 10, wherein the information includes a link from a first page of the information to a second page of the information.

12. A rich media file according to claim 1, wherein the viewer includes only a capability desired by a builder of the rich media file.

13. A rich media file stored in a machine-readable medium, comprising:
information to be displayed on a computer system, the information compressed using a compression technique;
a viewer designed to display the information on the computer system;
limit means for limiting viewing of the rich media file, the limit means drawn from a setting defining a predetermined number of viewings of the information, a setting defining a predetermined number of days, a predetermined expiration date, and a password controlling access to the rich media file;
checking means for checking if there is a later version of the rich media file;
a query asking a user if the user would like to retrieve the later version of the rich media file;
retrieval means for retrieving the later version of the rich media file; and
a unique file identification for the rich media file in addition to a file name.

14. A method for retrieving a rich media file, the method comprising:
selecting a link on a network;
downloading the rich media file over the network based on a unique file identification other than the link and other than a file name; and
saving the rich media file on a computer system.

15. A method according to claim 14, wherein selecting a link includes transmitting the unique file identification over the network.

16.   A method according to claim 14, wherein downloading the rich media file over the network from a remote server includes downloading the rich media file over the network from a remote server different from a second server that includes the link.

17.   A method according to claim 14, wherein downloading the rich media file includes downloading an earlier version of the rich media file.

18.   A method according to claim 14, the method further comprising opening the rich media file using a viewer built into the rich media file.

19.   A method according to claim 18, wherein opening the rich media file includes checking to see if a later version of the rich media file is available over the network.

20.   A method according to claim 19, wherein checking to see if a later version of the rich media file is available includes:
        asking a user whether the later version of the rich media file is desired; and
        if the user requests the later version of the rich media file:
            downloading the later version rich media file; and
            opening the later version of the rich media file using a viewer built into the later version of the rich media file.

21.   A method according to claim 18, wherein opening the rich media file includes:
        checking to see if the rich media file has expired; and
        if the rich media file has expired, asking the user if a later version of the rich media file or chained file is desired.

22.   A method according to claim 21, wherein checking to see if the rich media file has expired includes refusing to open the rich media file if the rich media file has expired.

23.   A method according to claim 18, wherein opening the rich media file includes:
        prompting for a password; and
        refusing to open the rich media file if the password is not provided.

24.   A method according to claim 14, the method further comprising deleting the rich media file, thereby leaving no footprint on the computer system.

25.   A computer-readable medium containing a program to retrieve a rich media file, the program being executable on computer system to implement the method of claim 14.

26.   A method for building a unitary rich media file, the method comprising:
assembling information for the unitary rich media file;
formatting the information;
coupling the information with a viewer; and
converting the information and the viewer to the unitary rich media file, so that the unitary rich media file is designed to leave no footprint on a user's system when removed.

27.   A method according to claim 26, wherein formatting the information includes placing the information on a plurality of pages.

28.   A method according to claim 27, wherein formatting the information further includes placing a link on a first page of the information to a second page of the information.

29.   A method according to claim 26, wherein formatting the information includes selecting viewing options to include with the rich media file.

30.   A method according to claim 26, wherein formatting the information includes assigning expiration parameters to the rich media file.

31.   A method according to claim 26, wherein formatting the information includes placing the information into a platform-independent intermediary state.

32.   A method according to claim 26, wherein coupling the information with a viewer includes coupling the information with the viewer for a particular computer platform.

33.   A method according to claim 26, wherein converting the information includes formatting the information from an intermediate file format to a format for display in the rich media file, the format for display designed to work with the viewer on a particular platform.

34.   A method according to claim 26, wherein converting the information includes compressing an image in the information.

5   35.   A method according to claim 26, wherein converting the information includes converting the information to the rich media file at a server not owned by a client building the rich media file.

36.   A method according to claim 26, the method further comprising:
10   storing the rich media file on a server; and
placing a link to the rich media file on a web page over a computer network.

37.   A method according to claim 36, wherein storing the rich media file includes assigning the rich media file a unique file identification in addition to a file name.
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38.   A method according to claim 37, wherein placing a link includes using the unique file identification in the link.

39.   A method according to claim 36, wherein storing the rich media file includes
20   storing the rich media file on a server different from the one storing the link.

40.   A method according to claim 36, wherein storing the rich media file includes retaining an earlier version of the rich media file on the server.

25   41.   A computer-readable medium containing a program to retrieving a rich media file, the program being executable on a computer system to implement the method of claim 26.

42.   A memory for storing a platform-independent rich media file including a data
30   structure stored in said memory, comprising:
information for the rich media file;
a unique identification for the rich media file;
a version number for the rich media file; and
at least one viewing option for the rich media file.

43. A memory according to claim 42, wherein the data structure further includes a client identification for a client creating the rich media file.

5 44. A memory according to claim 42, wherein the data structure further includes expiration features.

45. A memory according to claim 42, wherein the data structure further includes a viewer for displaying the information.

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46. A memory for storing a database of rich media files including a data structure stored in said memory, comprising:

a rich media file;

a profile of a user who downloaded the rich media file;

15 a client who generated the rich media file; and

a log storing a transaction in the data structure.

47. A memory according to claim 46, the data structure further including a mapping from the rich media file to the client.

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48. A memory according to claim 46, the data structure further including an auto-notification for the user when the rich media file is updated.

49. A method for enabling search results including screen snapshots, the method
25 comprising:

visiting a web site;

collecting search terms from the web site;

taking a screen snapshot of the web site;

storing the search terms and screen snapshot in a database;

30 receiving a search query from a user;

searching the database to respond to the search query, thereby locating the web site;

providing the user with a link to the web site; and

displaying the screen snapshot to the user.

50.   A method for a user to make a secure credit card purchase, the method comprising:

receiving a request for the secure credit card purchase from a merchant;

receiving from the user a secure credit card number and a verification code;

5   retrieving stored credit card information for the user;

requesting an authorization from a credit card company for the secure credit card purchase, the authorization performed off-line; and

if the credit card company authorizes the secure credit card purchase:

informing the merchant that the secure credit card purchase is approved; and

10   paying the merchant for the secure credit card purchase.